their æsthetic distribution and decoration a progressive gradation of character, and of developing all the requisite qualities from masculine grandeur and sublimity to feminine elegance and grace. The ancients adapted their edifices to their destined purpose, and gave them their decorative character in unison with that purpose. The embellishments of the temples harmonised with the nature and functions, or expressed the qualities of the deities to which they were dedicated. The temples of Jupiter, Minerva, Mars, Hercules, were, according to Vitruvius, to be of the Doric order, which bore striking analogy to the characters and actions of these divinities. The temples of Diana and Juno were Ionic, the order in which elegance and majesty are blended; while Flora, Venus, and the Naiads were honoured by the Corinthian, the elegance of its exquisite and delicate members, ornaments, profiles, flower and foliage ornamentation rendering it a fit representative of such exquisite conceptions. Probably, even in their general forms, the nature and office of the deity was considered, and expressed symbolically in their plans. The temples of Vesta were circular. The Pantheon, consecrated to all the gods, symbolised completeness or entirety by its rotundity. Why we must not employ the ornamental resources of architecture indiscriminately, or give the same character or degree of richness to every building alike, two reasons might be assigned: 1st, the innate love of variety requires a diversity of beautiful forms for its gratification; 2ndly, the sense of propriety dictates that each building should have a character appropriate to its use.

The word "beauty" is often used to express the entire merit of a building, including mechanical excellence, solidity, truthful adaptation or fitness, and the rest; and certainly a building cannot be perfectly beautiful, or give full satisfaction to the mind, unless faultless in all mechanical as well as æsthetic and artistic qualities. But the term "beauty" is generally confined to the quality or property in an object that, independent of fitness, excites pleasing or agreeable emotions. A building may be erected with attention to accommodation and stability only, and if these be obtained, it possesses a species of beauty, and excites proportionate admiration; but this is not beauty in the æsthetic sense, or what is generally understood by the word, and the absence of this quality or property destroys its claim to be considered as architecture, which is very properly defined as "the art of the beautiful in building." It is quite absurd to deny the existence of absolute beauty in the proportions of the Greek orders, independent of that arising from fitness, and to refer the laws of taste to the principle of utility: as well deny the existence of beauty in the human form and face, for the principles that rule there are identical with those of architecture. The evidence of design in an object, the correct adaptation of its form and structure to a definite end, is not sufficient to constitute that object beautiful. That beauty may be distinguished from utility could easily be shown. Take a drinking-cup of the plainest cylindrical form: its vertical section has not one line of grace, yet is this cup as well fitted to its end and as useful as one modelled after the most exquisite antique vase. Nature has recognised the distinction in her construction of animals and other objects. What æsthetic feeling and taste she exhibits in the contour of those parts of the human body, for example, that meet the eye,—I mean the exterior generally; and what seeming utilitarian indifference to beauty in the interior or concealed portions. In one every thing gives place to utility, while the other is cast in the highest moulds of symmetry and grace. There are, indeed, some things, so inauspicious is the nature of their office, that, when adapted fully to it, are incapable of much real beauty of an abstract kind; while in others, on the contrary, utility scarcely militates against beauty at all. Familiar examples might be given of this, and a cabinet-maker or designer would, I think, acknowledge their truth: a chair is an article which, to be of any real use, cannot be made very pleasing in its general shape, nor ornamental in detail: a loo-table, though more susceptible of elegance of form and embellishment, is still under this ban of ugliness; but on such objects as bookcases and sideboards artistic feeling may have full exercise, and nearly all the resources of decoration may be lavished.

Works of architecture are to be as beautiful as the general form dictated by considerations of utility is capable of, and we are satisfied with such qualified beauty, for admiration of its fitness enters into and blends with our appreciation of its æsthetic properties. There are some forms of objects that are dictated by utility, which would not on any other grounds be chosen; but once chosen as fittest for use, it is the business of the designer to give them all the beauty of which they are susceptible: while there are others, which, though utility has had full voice in their design, and done its utmost, are beauty's own. Some objects of extreme utility seem as if the principles of beauty and elegance alone had been consulted in their formation. The geometrical stair and staircase, for instance, in an important and spacious building, is one of those fortunate creatures of art. Where there is sufficient space, beauty may reign unmolested in the design of the staircase. Beauty, lightness, a fairy-like magnificence and elegance, may at once enter into its composition. There are other objects in which utility appears equally innocent of interfering with the conditions of beauty,—in which both seem to reign supreme: one, though without the sphere of civil architecture, might be named: a first-rate sailing vessel or ship of war in full rig, perhaps the most spirit-stirring sight on which the eye could rest, is as charming an object as if made only to please the eye, and æsthetic grace had been the sole aim of the designer.

Generally speaking, objects that are of great utility in architecture may be made beautiful in form, and are susceptible of a high decoration—or will, of any form, conduce to effective light and shade, as is the case with porticoes, door canopies, balconies, &c.; and there is scarcely any architectural feature that utility demands, that may not be made beautiful by a skilful hand. Convenience and comfort must come before beauty. Beauty is a want of our nature, but the desire for it does not arise until our physical wants are satisfied. We must be comfortable before we can enjoy either the divine poem or the gorgeous picture, or look round with complacency upon the proportions and decoration of our abode. The sacrifice of utility to beauty is, therefore, a reversal of the natural order of things; it is not only an outrage upon taste, but a violation of common sense.

Beauty is an abstract quality distinct from expression—a quality *per se*, and is obtained by two means,—1st, by general form and proportion; and, 2ndly, by ornamentation, or the superaddition of embellishment. And expression of character is neither less nor more than rightly employing these means, properly drawing upon and using the decorative resources of architecture, which becomes a hieroglyphic language in developing and embodying various qualities, as grandeur and sublimity, or richness and elegance, grace and magnificence, and all the intermediate grades. And an edifice cannot be said to be beautiful in the high, intellectual sense of the word unless a truthful and definite character has been given to it. Expressiveness in architecture is as much superior to abstract or æsthetic beauty as what is called intellectual is superior to mere physical beauty, and, indeed, bears striking analogy to that lofty order of beauty which a noble heart and brilliant genius stamp upon the countenance.

Character in a building is a positive quality; a sterling and intrinsic virtue; it informs and instructs, while abstract beauty merely pleases. Truth is "the summit of being," and the marriage of beauty and truth is the ultimatum of art. A well characterised structure, a truthful architectural production, is the representative of a fact, and it becomes thought and feeling in the mind of the observer. It is organised idea and sentiment, and will appear "to share the life of things;" whereas a building designed without reference to its purpose is an object detached—an intellectual nonentity; having no meaning, it stands for nothing, it represents nothing; it is stone and wood and lime cut off from nature, an outcast from intellect and law.

Expression in architecture is given by three different means—viz. 1st, By truthful adaptation of form and arrangement of the parts to the destined purpose of the edifice; 2ndly, By form, and proportion, and general style of decoration under the guidance of analogy; and, 3rdly, By allegory, i.e. symbolic sculptural illustration.

The first medium of expression is truthfulness of plan,—the having both horizontal and vertical divisions and subdivisions of an edifice in all respects true to the requirements and necessities of the institution for which it was reared; or adapted to its uses whatever its object or degree of importance; adding nothing irrelevant, omitting nothing that is necessary, and hiding nothing but what decency forbids to be exposed. Exact adaptation of form to purpose is the most direct element of expression, and assists more largely than is generally supposed in characterising the structure. It is an essential,—nay, the foundation of all artistic expression. Utility or necessity called for the building, and the building, if the architect has faithfully responded to that call, will, in the absence of artistic expression, generally hint at the purpose. In most cases where fitness is thus attended to, the expression is in a great measure given,—the character of the edifice is half formed. Without it, the most energetic or judicious employment of the decorative resources of the art is vain: parts which are essential to the use are essential to an appropriate expression; and a cause of failure in giving this quality is a neglect of the principle to which I refer. Essential parts are disguised or concealed, while unessential ones, that must be mute or false in expression, are added. If we were more truthful generally, we should be more expressive. Our roofs, for instance, must generally be inclined, and are inclined, in this climate; but we hide the fact by hipping. There is no sufficient reason for this. A pediment is the natural termination of an inclined roof, but roofs of ordinary houses are generally treated as if the pediment were no feature in architecture, or, at least, as if it were an objectionable one, for there is quite a struggle to avoid it. Now it is not only a recognised architectural feature bequeathed us by Greek and Roman, but one of the most picturesque we have. The picturesque is a needful element of expression in domestic buildings, and truthfulness of treatment in design will assist us to originate it; nay, will itself suggest or produce it.* Whether or not, we should never, for any purpose, hide a necessary feature of our buildings, even to obtain the severe outline of temple architecture. We pay but a poor compliment to Greek art when we sacrifice common sense at its shrine, and make it a mask to conceal our English habits and way of life. The ancients themselves made no such blunders; they availed themselves to the utmost of the labours of their predecessors; but they imitated in the right spirit, and adapted their buildings to their own purposes in all their peculiarities. We need not the affectation of antique temple, or of any class of building whatever. As to the detail, the Greek and Roman mouldings and indivisible ornaments are to be recognised as elements only—as words or letters of the art,—characters of expression—and as such they will suit our purposes; and having the same relation now to the human mind and feeling, and to universal nature, that they had two thousand years ago, they will look as well in London or Liverpool as they did in Athens or Corinth.

* This is almost the only means of doing it. The picturesque is a quality very difficult to create: in which it is vain to attempt to emulate nature. It exists in perfection only in her works, and can scarcely be designed in any degree; and though it is a most desirable species of beauty in domestic architecture, still takes the strongest hold of the affections, it is best, after that truthfulness of arrangement which I have recommended, to leave the rest to time and weather. Those who attempt to design the picturesque generally overdo it, and run into the fantastic and unmeaning.

To remove this OCR and PDF Compression visit ThePaperlessOffice.org